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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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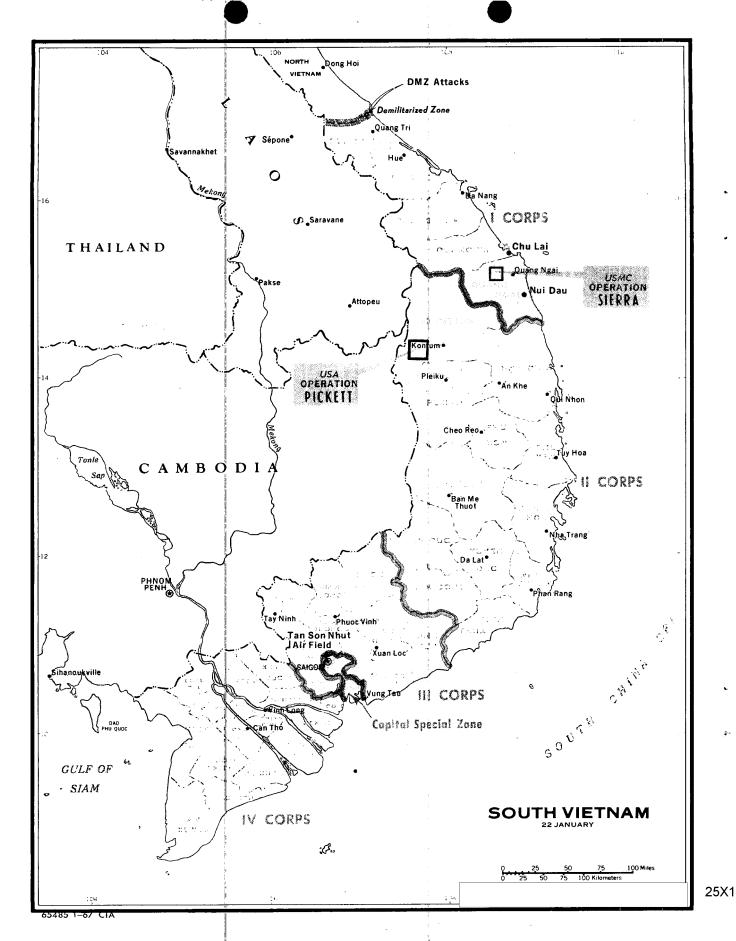
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Information as of 1600 22 January 1967	25X1
HIGHLIGHTS	
on 21 January simultaneously attacked and overran five South Vietnamese police posts and at least one civilian hamlet in the southeastern portion of the Demilitarized Zone. I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Military activity in South Vietnam was generally light and scattered during the past weekend, with the exception of a heavy engagement on 20 January between two ARVN battalions and an estimated Viet Cong battalion near Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airfield (Paras. 1-2). US combat forces have terminated two major search-and-destroy operations SIERRA and PICKETT in Quang Ngai and Kontum provinces, respectively (Paras. 3-4). Communist forces on 21 January attacked a Series of South Vietnamese police posts and civilian hamlets in the southeastern portion of the DMZ (Para. 5). Communist-inspired civilian demonstrations were launched against GVN regular and paramilitary outposts in Quang Ngai Province on 21 January (Para. 6). II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Constituent Assembly continues to make progress on approving a draft constitution (Para. 1). From conversations with General Vinh Loc, II Corps commander, it appears that both he and Premier Ky will support a bid by dissident montagnard leader Y Bham Enuol to retire to Thailand after settling differences with the GVN (Paras. 2-3).	25X1

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Marcos is continuing his efforts to spark an Asian peace initiative (Paras. 1-2).



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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. Allied forces were engaged in about 30 battalion-size or larger operations against Communist troop concentrations and suspected base areas this weekend.
- 2. On 20 January, two ARVN airborne battalions inflicted heavy losses on an estimated Viet Cong battalion during a local sweep operation in Gia Dinh Province, approximately ten miles west-northwest of Saigon. One hundred and two enemy troops were reported killed and ten captured, in contrast to government losses of one killed and 14 wounded. There was speculation that the Communist guerrilla force may have been massing for a possible penetration assault against Saigon's principal airfield, Tan Son Nhut, located about four miles east of the battle area. Captured documents, prisoner interrogations, have consistently pinpointed Tan Son Nhut as a primary Viet Cong target in the Saigon area.

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- 3. Battalion-strength US Marine task force elements on 21 January terminated search-and-destroy Operation SIERRA in Quang Ngai Province after nearly six weeks. This sweep, targeted against an estimated three Viet Cong battalions suspected of operating in an area approximately 30 miles south-southeast of the US Marine enclave at Chu Lai, resulted in enemy losses of 111 killed and ten captured. American casualties numbered ten killed and 50 wounded.
- 4. In South Vietnam's western highlands, two battalions of the US 101st Airborne Division terminated Operation PICKETT, a reconnaissance in-force ground sweep conducted from 8 December to 19 January along the Cambodian border in Kontum Province. Major elements of the 1st and 10th North Vietnamese Army (NVA) divisions, known to be operating in this general area, offered little resistance to PICKETT; however, a number of small unit contacts did occur. Cumulative enemy losses totaled 63 killed, 18 captured, and 109 weapons seized, as against US casualties of 23 killed and 104 wounded.

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Viet Cong Activity

- 5. Communist forces on 21 January simultaneously attacked and overran five South Vietnamese police posts and at least one civilian hamlet in the southeastern portion of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Preliminary casualty reports indicate friendly losses of seven killed and eight wounded. Enemy losses were unknown.
- In northern coastal Quang Ngai Province, the Viet Cong on 21 January incited a group of approximately 1,000 South Vietnamese civilians to march upon a local popular forces outpost 21 miles south-southeast of Quang Ngai city and demand the surrender of its garrison. When the demonstrators refused to disperse, the militia unit opened fire, killing five Communist agitators. Simultaneous with this incident, another group of approximately 60 Viet Cong - inspired civilian demonstrators launched a protest march against the ARVN occupation of Nui Dau outpost, some 25 miles south-southeast of Quang Ngai city. This group also refused to disperse, whereupon ARVN forces opened fire, killing three demonstrators. In addition, four demonstrators were taken prisoner and 37 detained as possible Viet Cong suspects.

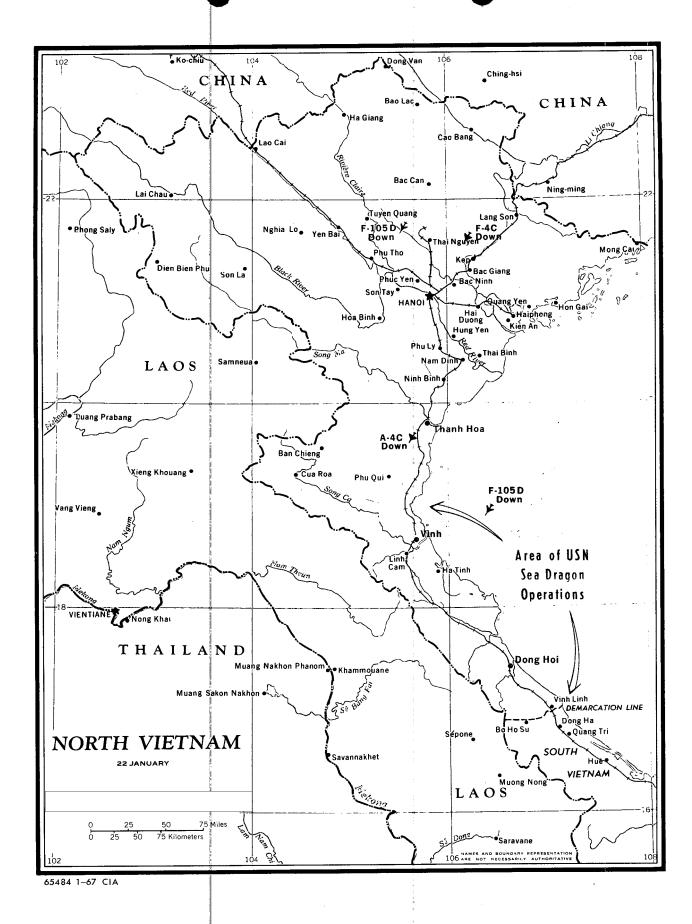
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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. The Constituent Assembly, during the afternoon session of 19 January, engaged in a disorderly and sometimes bitter debate over Article 3 of the constitution. The debate centered on whether the constitution should refer to separation of powers between the three branches of government or only separation of functions. The arguments were largely semantic in nature. The amended draft which was finally approved stated that the functions and powers of the three branches, "must be clearly delineated," and their functions "coordinated and harmonized" in the general interests of public order and prosperity.
- 2. Embassy officials recently learned through conversations with II Corps commander, General Vinh Loc, that he and Premier Ky believe an affirmative response should be made to FULRO leader Y Bham Enuol's request to go into voluntary exile in Thailand. They also agree that the US and GVN should work together on the matter.
- 3. Meanwhile, plans are progressing for the scheduled return to government control of 1,000-2,000 armed members of the dissident montagnard organization, FULRO, on 25 January. General Vinh Loc appears in agreement with the plan, but some last-minute hitch could yet develop.



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

- 1. The North Vietnamese air defense system displayed increased aggressiveness against US strike aircraft during the past weekend.
- 2. Eighty airborne surface-to-air (SAM) missiles were sighted by US pilots during 20-21 January, bringing to 122 the number sighted for the three-day period 19 to 21 January. One US aircraft, a USAF F-105D, may have been downed by a SAM (see para. 4 below); however, no other losses to SAMs were reported. Three other US aircraft were also downed, but the causes are unknown.
- 3. Between 48 and 51 MIG aircraft were observed by US aircraft on 20 and 21 January. Four air encounters occurred on 20 January involving four US flights of four aircraft each, and a total of from 13 to 16 MIGs. One F-105 was damaged by cannon fire but returned to base without incident. No damage to enemy aircraft was reported.

Naval Activity Along DRV Coast

4. On 19 January, the US destroyers Stoddard and Keppler came under fire of DRV coastal shore batteries during the conduct of SEA DRAGON (coastal shipping interdiction) operations approximately 18 miles south-southeast of Vinh. At the time of the attack, both destroyers had closed to within 14,000 yards of the beach to direct fire against a line of 40 to 60-foot waterborne logistical craft and a suspected boat repair area. Enemy fire was erratic and caused no damage to the destroyers. The shore batteries were subsequently silenced by counterbattery fire from the destroyers.

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	V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	
» 3	1. North Vietnam has stepped up its propaganda campaign in support of the Liberation Front's call for a seven-day cessation of military activity during the Tet holiday season in South Vietnam. In a lengthy broadcast beamed to South Vietnam on 21 January, Hanoi radio criticized allied violations of earlier truces and reiterated its previous condemnations of the Saigon government's offer of a four-day truce during Tet. In addition, the broadcast included the Hanoi regime's first reference to the Saigon government's 16 January offer to talk with the North Vietnamese about extending the truce. Claiming that such a move was undertaken at the instigation of the US and that it was designed to sabotage the Front's "humanitarian policy," the broadcast asked in sarcastic language what right did the "puppets" have "to negotiate this and that and who would care to negotiate with them?"	
	2. The broadcast went on to extol the virtues and strengths of the Front and to underscore its claim that it is the "only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people." Moreover, the broadcast held out to local units and individuals in the South Vietnamese Army the possibility of making arrangements with local Front units in order to extend the truce to meet NFLSV terms. The broadcast made no mention, however, of an 18 January Front broadcast which held out the possibility of talks between the NFLSV and the Saigon government on extending the truce as well as the possibility of local arrangements.	
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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

Marcos to Propose New Peace Initiative

- 1. The Philippine Government is continuing its efforts to spark a Vietnam peace move, hoping to use an all-Asian working group as a vehicle for approaching North Vietnam. Through the group's good offices, North and South Vietnam would then each select three countries for a peace commission whose role would be to begin a dialogue between Saigon and Hanoi.
- 2. This latest effort seems to reflect Marcos' often expressed desire for an all-Asian forum for settling regional problems as well as an effort by Marcos to stay in the post-Manila summit limelight. Marcos intends to announce his new effort in his State of the Nation speech to be delivered on 23 January.